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### Testimony about Bilingual education in Connecticut

My name is Dr. Aram Ayalon, I am a board member in New Britain and also the chair of the Teacher education Department in Central Connecticut State University. Two years ago I was on the legislator English Language Learner Task Force.

It seems evident to me that the State of Connecticut has mostly abandoned its responsibility of overseeing implementation of bilingual education legislation. A case of point is New Britain.

In 2012 a new superintendent took over in New Britain. His first action was to get rid of the dual language Spanish/English School and get rid of bilingual education. He replaced these programs with English Language Development (ELD) – a grammar-based English only approach (see also PBS News hour report). In order to ensure he was following state law he contacted the State Education department. The bilingual education department which by now has only one consultant, approved the program suggesting that the law in Connecticut allows almost anything as long as there is some vague promise of some support for some students in their native language. However, the consultant admitted she alone does not have the capacity to provide full oversight over the service provided to 30,000 ELL students in the State of Connecticut. It also appears that one person does not have the capacity to check the scientific basis of the teaching practices regarding teaching ELL Student.

ELD is a case of point. Research in Arizona where ELD was implemented, where students take 4 hours of English grammar every day for a year, found that Arizona has made little to no progress in closing the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students in math and reading. This is due, at least in part, to its highly restrictive language instruction policies. Studies conducted by UCLA researchers found that such approach segregates ELL students from their English-speaking peers and increases the achievement gap between these groups. This same model was removed following a successful court challenge brought by civil rights groups in a California school district where ELL, mostly Latino, schoolchildren were suffering educational failure under the ELD program (labeled SLADI).

In summary, Connecticut needs to:

1. Hire more supervisors of bilingual education at the state level to increase capacity and supervision
2. Ensure districts are using approaches that have scientific based and have proven success
3. Ensure schools districts are providing a variety of bilingual education approaches to meet the needs of students
4. Provide opportunities for all students to become bilingual.

## Reference

1. The Education of English Language Learners in Arizona: A History of Underachievement

**<http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=16601>**

2. Arizona's English immersion program could be unlawful

**<http://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2011/02/23/arizona%E2%80%99s-english-immersion-program-could-be-unlawful/>**

3. Implementing Structured English Immersion (SEI) in Arizona: Benefits, Costs, Challenges, and Opportunities

<http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/language-minority-students/implementing-structured-english-immersion-sei-in-arizona-benefits-costs-challenges-and-opportunities/?searchterm=ELL>

4. Dinuba Unified sued for how they teach English, May 30 2012

<http://abclocal.go.com/kfsn/story?section=news/education&id=8682731>

5. PBS News Hour report on New Britain

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily\\_videos/bilingual-classrooms-turn-english-only-in-effort-to-improve-test-scores/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily_videos/bilingual-classrooms-turn-english-only-in-effort-to-improve-test-scores/)